

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

I want to implore you to consider nursing services as you manage the budget. If all we did were eyes, ears and band-aids there would be no need. However I am often told that nurses are the glue that holds schools and families together. Let me give you an example...

Yesterday I took three girls to Operation School Bell to get clothes. This is ordinarily the job of our family support worker, but she was out on family leave. So as the nurse I picked up the pieces. Today I took one of the three children to get glasses. Since I belong to my national nurses organization, I was able to get a gift certificate for them to go to an ophthalmologist and get a very thorough exam.

Last week I took a child to the 45th Street Clinic for a two-hour dentist appointment. If she had not gone the Clinic was going to call CPS.

WHY you ask...? Well, none of these families speak English, have transportation, or have medical coverage. In October '03, all families who had been in the U.S. less than 5 years were cut from medical coupons and offered Washington Basic Health, which has a long waiting list and requires a payment. Also, Washington Basic Health does not cover glasses or dentistry. Much of my time is spent tracking down free or reduced services and getting families there. Do you know what it feels like to look in a child's mouth and see 90% of the teeth rotted to the gum? And the child doesn't even complain.

Why does this need to be done at school when we are primarily an educational agency? Because NO ONE else does it. I worked at Children's Hospital for years -- they support families, but only the families that get there. In the schools we find families that no one else sees. Please consider this as you look at budget cuts. Long term, cutting the budget for nurses and family support workers will be more costly than anyone can anticipate.

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